

# CULTURAL DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES AND URBAN REVITALIZATION

## A survey of US cities

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*Municipal governments around the globe increasingly turn to museums, performing arts centers, arts districts, and other cultural activities to promote and revitalize their cities. While a significant body of literature examines revitalization strategies that focus primarily around entertainment and commerce, the empirical body of research that specifically investigates the role of cultural strategies in urban redevelopment is still growing. This paper first discusses the development of municipal cultural strategies in the United States, and draws from the literature to outline the characteristics of three different models of such strategies. Second, the paper presents findings from a national survey distributed to municipal agencies involved in the promotion and development of cultural activities and facilities in large and medium-sized US cities. The survey data indicate that although most agencies are guided by a varied set of goals, entrepreneurial objectives continue to guide the development and support of cultural activities in most cities.*

KEYWORDS cultural development strategies; US cities

### **Introduction**

The use of cultural activities and facilities to bolster a city's image, attract tourism, and foster economic development has become widespread not only in traditional cultural capitals of the world such as New York or Paris, but also in places not as well-known for their cultural status, such as Newark, New Jersey or Bilbao, Spain. Cities have enthusiastically pursued the building of museums, concert halls, performing arts centers, galleries, and arts districts, as part of wider urban development and revitalization strategies. The prevalence of cultural activities in recent urban development programs makes it imperative for planners and policy makers to understand how they contribute to local economic development and how they affect the distribution of resources for social, cultural, and economic goals.

Cultural development strategies have acquired significance in the economic development plans of cities, because cultural activities are considered as urban tourist draws (Richards 2001) and a significant factor in how individuals choose where to live and work (Florida 2002). While a considerable literature examines urban revitalization strategies, the primary focus has been on entertainment and business-oriented facilities such as festival market-places and entertainment districts (Boyer 1992; Hannigan 1998), sports arenas (Chapin 2004; Noll & Zimbalist 1997), convention centers (Sanders 2002), and office complexes (Fainstein

2001). Although the research on cultural development initiatives continues to grow, as evidenced by the recent special issues in the *International Journal of Cultural Policy* (Gibson & Stevenson 2004), *Local Economy* (Wilks-Heeg & North 2004), and *Urban Studies* (Miles & Paddison 2005), the bulk of the research focuses on Western Europe and evaluates the success of specific cultural projects in urban regeneration (Bianchini 1993; Gomez 1998; Griffiths 1995; Mommaas 2004; Montgomery 2004; Rodriguez *et al.* 2001; van Aalst & Boogaarts 2002). The current literature lacks, however, a comparative analysis of how local governments in the US develop and implement cultural strategies. Many agree that “culture is more and more the business of cities” (Zukin 1995, p. 2), but to what extent do cultural activities become mechanisms for economic development? What types of cultural activities and programs do municipal governments support? Which are the intended goals and benefits of these activities? How do cities balance economic, social, and educational goals in pursuing cultural strategies?

To address these questions we first give a brief overview of the evolution and dilemmas of cultural development in North American and European cities. Drawing from the urban development literature, we outline three types of cultural strategies – “Entrepreneurial Strategies”, “Creative Class Strategies”, and “Progressive Strategies” – that describe the characteristics and objectives of distinct approaches to cultural development. We then present the results of a survey which explores the perspectives, motivations, and goals of representatives from Departments of Cultural Affairs in large and medium-sized US cities.<sup>1</sup> By analyzing the views of those involved in developing and promoting cultural strategies, the survey is a useful step towards determining the extent to which each of the three strategies discussed in the literature materialize on the ground. In so doing, the survey helps to determine the extent to which municipalities consider cultural activities as mechanisms for economic development and helps us gain an understanding of how and why the agencies prioritize particular activities, programs, or projects in their city.

### The Rise of Cultural Development Strategies

Over the last three decades, a complex relationship between local political and economic conditions and larger global forces has transformed the economic base, demographics, and political economy of many cities in North America and Europe. Innovations in communication, transportation, production, and management have enabled more far-flung business operations, engendered the deindustrialization of many cities, and spurred the growth of an economy marked by an expansion of service industries. Other trends include overall higher levels of education, professional populations interested in urban lifestyles with significant disposable income spent on leisure activities, and the growth of consumption as a means to affirm one’s status and identity. As these broad social and economic changes have occurred, city governments throughout North America and Europe have become more focused on initiatives that will produce economic growth within their locality.

A prevalent response by municipal governments in this regard is to devise cultural development strategies that capitalize on these trends.<sup>2</sup> As cities find themselves engulfed in inter-urban competition, they concentrate on developing a broad range of cultural activities to catalyze private development, increase consumption by residents and tourists, improve the city image, and enhance the local quality of life. For their part, cultural institutions often participate in urban redevelopment coalitions as they too are under pressure to

generate revenue and “out-compete” rival institutions in other cities (Strom 2002; Whitt 1987). By reaching out to wider audiences, welcoming corporate sponsorship, and providing opportunities for consumption through blockbuster events, cafés, and merchandising, contemporary cultural institutions fit well into urban revitalization schemes (Wu 2002). Thus, independently and in partnership with private and nonprofit groups, city governments have subsidized a diverse assortment of cultural facilities ranging from the experimental, such as the Yerba Buena Center for the Arts in San Francisco, to more mainstream flagship museums such as the Art Gallery of Ontario. They have helped to create cultural and arts districts such as Temple Bar in Dublin and the Dallas Arts District. They have also developed and revived high-profile cultural events such as Artscape in Baltimore or the New Orleans Jazz Festival. In conjunction with promotional efforts, municipal cultural development initiatives have set off a veritable “cultural building boom” as cities in the US and Western Europe attempt to create a thriving consumer and tourist economy (Landry & Wood 2003; Strom 2002; Zukin 1995).

As a result, cultural development has become a concern of multiple public sector agencies and is realized through a diverse set of public-private partnerships. Concurrently, municipalities increasingly charge their Departments of Cultural Affairs – agencies traditionally responsible for social, cultural, educational, and community-based goals – with the additional responsibilities of a tourist bureau and an economic development office. While consolidation of several small municipal agencies under the umbrella of a unified Department of Cultural Affairs has taken place in many North American cities, some cities have also retained free-standing public or quasi-public agencies or commissions entrusted with specific cultural and tourist-related activities (e.g. cultural tourist bureaus, heritage commissions, historic preservation departments, or special events offices).

To be sure this is not the first time in history that cities have devoted public funds to cultural amenities (Kearns & Philo 1993; Ward 1998). Cultural facilities and events have long played a role in urban development. During the City Beautiful era, world fairs and facilities such as the Field Museum in Chicago were seen by public officials as boosting the city image and attracting visitors. At the same time, those active in social reform movements conceptualized public museums as institutions for the education of the masses and for combating the negative affects of industrialization and urbanization (Steffensen-Bruce 1998). In the 1950s and 1960s, municipal governments in the US embarked on urban renewal projects such as the Lincoln Center in New York (Young 1980) and the Los Angeles Music Center (Asseyev 1968) to revitalize “blighted” areas and emulate their European counterparts by reinforcing a cultured image of the city. In the 1960s and 1970s, some mainstream cultural institutions began to open their doors to broader publics, displaying a wider range and interpretation of histories and cultures (Simpson 1996). Concurrently, many local and state governments, particularly in Western European countries, focus cultural policy on social priorities and in support of community arts initiatives aimed at a more inclusive and bottom-up approach to cultural planning (Bianchini 1993; Evans 2003).

While today’s cultural strategies emerge from this history, they also display some unique trends. The recent rush of municipal governments to invest in cultural and entertainment amenities has become a universal undertaking (Eisinger 2000). In cities of all sizes and demographic profiles, the construction and expansion of cultural facilities has proceeded at a rapid pace. A 1993 survey by the Association of Performing Arts Presenters found that over one third of their member facilities were built between 1980 and 1993 with strong financial support from local governments (McCarthy *et al.* 2001). This wave of cultural facility expansion has come at a time when state and federal level funding for the arts in many places has

been scaled back and assumed by a hybrid assortment of municipal, nonprofit, and private sector sources (Schuster 1998; Wu 2002).

Some see these projects as primarily constructed for the “visitor class” (Eisinger 2000), but the reality is more complex. Cultural amenities may capture tourist dollars but they can also offer educational programs for a wider public. They have the potential to improve a city’s image, but they can also provide employment for local artists. Critics have highlighted the tension between the economic goal of promoting prestigious, high culture facilities to attract affluent visitors and the social and educational goals of popularizing culture and increasing its access for the masses (Bianchini 1993). The desire to establish a strong city image has in fact prompted many municipalities to privilege flagship projects in downtown areas, court elite cultural institutions, and hire world renowned architects in an attempt to “rebrand” the city (Vale & Warner 2001). This “internationalization” strategy often occurs at the expense of locating decentralized cultural activities in low-income neighborhoods, is seen as oppositional to indigenous local identities (Rodriguez *et al.* 2001), and as resulting in the “serial reproduction” of cultural development projects from city to city (Harvey 1989a). Are these dilemmas and tensions addressed by Cultural Affairs Departments in the US? In carving out a cultural agenda, to what extent do these agencies allow economic goals to supersede social and educational goals?

### A Typology of Cultural Development Strategies

Municipalities engage in cultural development in multiple ways. To conceptualize these approaches, we draw from the urban development literature to group them into three types of strategies: Entrepreneurial Strategies, Creative Class Strategies, and Progressive Strategies. Each strategy type is based on a normative set of characteristics including strategy goals, the types of cultural projects pursued, geographic focus, and target audience (Table 1). Entrepreneurial Strategies most clearly pursue a proactive, market-driven approach guided by purely economic objectives; Creative Class Strategies seek economic development through the provision of quality of life and recreational amenities; and Progressive Strategies follow a more grassroots and neighborhood-based approach to cultural development that seeks to respond more directly to the needs of local communities and arts organizations.

These approaches are intended as a framework to classify diverse sets of municipal cultural objectives and activities. As theoretical constructs they cannot perfectly capture the diversity of cultural development strategies pursued in cities. Nor do we attempt to “pigeon-hole” the agencies in our survey into one specific model. Indeed, local agencies frequently combine aspects of each model depending on their specific resources and context. Priorities of mayoral regimes may shift the focus of cultural development and the degree of support for particular projects (Savitch & Kantor 2002). Nonetheless, the models help to connect a diverse set of activities – ranging from flagship cultural projects to arts education or job training programs – which are commonly seen as falling under the heading of cultural development, and are typically under the purview of the surveyed agencies.

#### *Entrepreneurial Strategies*

The entrepreneurial strategies enacted by local governments all but eschew social goals in favor of enhancing economic growth (Hall & Hubbard 1998; Harvey 1989b). Public

**TABLE 1**  
Cultural development strategies.

Strategy Type	Goals	Types of Cultural Projects and Programs	Geographic Focus	Target Audiences
Entrepreneurial	Economic growth through tourism, city image Catalyze private sector investments	Flagship cultural projects Spectacular events Promotional activities	Downtown, "prime city areas"	Tourists and Conventioneers Affluent residents and suburbanites
Creative Class	Economic growth through quality of life amenities Attract new residents/employees in the "creative economy"	Arts and entertainment districts Collaboration between arts and private sector	Central city and historic urban neighborhoods	Prospective and existing residents Young urban professionals and "knowledge-based" workers
Progressive	Community development Arts education and access Local cultural production	Community arts centers Arts education programs	Inner-city neighborhoods Underserved neighborhoods	Underserved residential populations

officials work to create an attractive business environment through a host of incentives such as tax abatements, land contributions and write-downs, and relaxed zoning regulations, placing strong emphasis on creating high-profile facilities and events to catalyze private developments and market their cities as "places to play" (Fainstein & Judd 1999). In the process, local governments seek to adapt their built environments and economies to better compete for the growing industries of the "new economy" – tourism, culture, and information technologies (Judd 2003; Nevarez 2003; Scott 2000).

What began in the late 1970s and early 1980s as public-private ventures to regenerate dying downtowns and create retail spaces in historically themed environments (Frieden & Sagalyn 1989) has exploded into the construction of flagship cultural complexes (Bianchini 1993; Hamnett & Shoval 2003; Smyth 1994) and spectacular cultural events (Richards & Wilson 2004; Schuster 2001) competing for attention. A city's image is deemed critically important to attract new capital and tourists (Holcomb 1999; 2001). Therefore, cultural projects have emerged as important instruments to reinforce the status and "brand identity" of cities (Evans 2003). Additionally, cultural facilities may at times function as a "Trojan horse" for local growth coalitions (Whitt 1987). Because of their perceived benefits to the local quality of life, large-scale development projects may include cultural facilities as a local "amenity" to overcome resistance from community groups or as a concession to the negative externalities generated by a project. Due to their perceived economic success and marketing capabilities, a broad range of cultural facilities have become centerpieces of major urban redevelopment projects, typically located in downtown areas (Mommaas 2004; Strom 2002). Examples of cultural development and branding strategies abound from the New Jersey Performing Arts Center in Newark (Strom 1999) and the Tech Museum of Innovation in San Jose (Perrin 2002) to the culture-led revitalization strategies of European cities such as Bilbao and Glasgow (Booth & Boyle 1993; Garcia 2005; Gomez 1998; Mooney 2004; Rodriguez *et al.* 2001).

While proponents have touted the economic development potential of the entrepreneurial model, opponents have condemned it as “selling cities” (Kearns & Philo, 1993). Critics charge that entrepreneurial initiatives privilege the private sector over the public good as they concentrate more on building the city for visitors and affluent residents rather than the entire population (Eisinger 2000; Zukin 1995). Often, the costs of constructing massive entertainment, convention, and cultural facilities are shielded from the general public and rarely put to a direct vote (Sanders 2002). Not only do these physically insulated and spectacular “tourist bubbles” function to distract the local population from more pressing social issues such as poverty, crime, and homelessness, they frequently do not catalyze economic growth as promised (Harvey 1989b; Judd 2003; Loukaitou-Sideris & Banerjee 1998; Zukin 1997). At the same time the emphasis on large-scale projects and tourist attractions often deflects investment away from cultural projects in city neighborhoods or those programs not directly aimed at economic development (Griffiths 1995). In short, urban entrepreneurialism encourages cities to measure the success of cultural activities according to economic standards rather than wider public benefits (van Aalst & Boogaarts 2002; Mommaas 2004).

### *Creative Class Strategies*

Creative class strategies concentrate on quality of life issues and lifestyle amenities to attract the “creative class” – a wide ranging classification of highly educated workers and “knowledge-based professionals” including such diverse occupations as software designers, architects, artists, writers, and lawyers (Clark *et al.* 2002; Florida 2002; Landry 2000). These individuals are considered essential to attract the desired new economies and stimulate the growth of the local consumer economy. This approach is based on the premise that cities must preserve and enhance their multifunctional, historic urban neighborhoods, cultural and recreational activities, and ethnic diversity to draw people who are attractive to businesses in the new economy (Florida 2002; Glaeser *et al.* 2003). As Florida (2002, p. 223) states, regional economic growth is driven not by creating a pro-business climate, but by the “location choices of creative people ... who prefer places that are diverse, tolerant and open to new ideas”.

Cultural activities are a primary element of the creative city because they provide opportunities for consumption, leisure, and the means to reinforce the cosmopolitan identity of the creative class. In contrast to the traditional entrepreneurial strategy of erecting large entertainment destinations and cultural facilities to promote a city to tourists, this approach emphasizes cultivating clusters of smaller-scale music and performing arts venues, art galleries, and nightclubs (Florida 2002). Additionally, creative cities seek to nurture the economic potential of the arts by developing opportunities for collaboration between arts organizations and commercial enterprises (Bulick *et al.* 2003). Proponents point to cities such as Austin, Texas and Portland, Oregon that have concentrated on the provision of cultural amenities without the large, high-profile flagship destinations, and neighborhoods in larger cities such as SoHo in New York (Zukin 1982), Wicker Park in Chicago (Lloyd 2002) and South of Market (SoMA) in San Francisco (Wolfe 1999) as models to emulate.

Proponents of the creative city strategy assume that economic benefits will trickle down to those who hold the low-wage service jobs necessary to maintain the creative class lifestyle. Critics, however, argue that this approach results in a biased economic development program, which targets one favored class of people. Although ethnic diversity, a clean

environment, and access to the arts hold a central place in this model, these goals are sought in order to manufacture the appropriate experiences desired by the creative class, rather than for the benefit of the entire public. Additionally, building the creative city may contribute to gentrification and displacement of lower income populations, including the artists on which this strategy depends (Ley 2003).

### *Progressive Strategies*

Progressive strategies challenge the tenets of growth-oriented approaches to cultural development. Rather than assuming benefits will trickle down the economic ladder, progressive initiatives focus on providing a wide distribution of benefits to citizens. Success here is not measured in terms of economic growth, but the goal is to reduce economic and social disparities and raise overall standards of living through redistributive policies and the encouragement of citizen participation (Clavel 1986; Fitzgerald & Green Leigh 2002; Krumholz & Forester 1990).<sup>3</sup> Progressive strategies seek to negotiate public benefits from the private sector through environmental impact fees, affordable housing requirements, public transportation assistance, and higher tax rates in exchange for development rights (Savitch & Kantor 2002).

Progressive cultural strategies seek to widen access to and participation in the arts, support local cultural production, and utilize the arts to strengthen community identity and to revitalize disadvantaged neighborhoods (Bianchini 1993; Evans 2001; Hayden 1995). City governments have developed programs to fund arts education, turn vacant properties into community cultural centers, and stimulate interest in local heritage and culture (Borrupt 2003). Examples range from city-operated community arts spaces such as the Barnsdall Art Park in Los Angeles and the Little Black Pearl Workshop in Chicago to neighborhood arts organizations such as the Eastside Arts Alliance in Oakland. The development of a progressive cultural agenda is rooted in the 1960s civil rights and feminist movements. Here, culture is considered as a site of grassroots community activism and political debate – those who feel excluded not only demand a stronger voice in mainstream cultural institutions, but also set up organizations to deal with issues pertinent to their communities (Loukaitou-Sideris & Grodach 2004; Simpson 1996).

Progressive cultural strategies seek to redistribute the benefits of the “cultural pie” more widely, but often face structural constraints. In a capitalist economy, the private sector has the upper hand in development decisions (Loukaitou-Sideris & Banerjee 1998). Linkage fees and exactions imposed upon developers by municipalities have only had limited success in ensuring social goals (affordable housing, day care centers, open spaces, cultural facilities), as developers can choose to locate their investments in cities with a more “favorable business climate”. Indeed, it is often the case that municipal agencies are able to promote progressive strategies only when they coincide with the broader entrepreneurial agenda of enhancing the local tax base or generating consumer spending.

As the previous three approaches demonstrate, cultural development strategies may take on multiple forms and serve numerous, often competing ends. Using the Entrepreneurial, Creative, and Progressive strategies of cultural and economic development as a framework, we set out to identify the wide range of cultural strategies employed by US cities and to determine the extent to which those involved consider them as mechanisms for urban development.

### Cultural Strategies of US Cities: A Survey

To better understand the practices and goals of municipal governments regarding cultural strategies, we administered a survey to the Departments of Cultural Affairs in all cities with a 2000 US census population greater than 250,000.<sup>4</sup> The survey was designed to provide a comparative understanding of cultural development strategies at the local level. Such an overview of municipal cultural strategies has not been carried out previously in the US, and therefore offers important insight into local development strategies nationwide.<sup>5</sup>

The survey was distributed to a total of 49 agencies in 49 cities, and we received a complete response from 29 agencies (59%).<sup>6,7</sup> The choice to focus the survey on Departments of Cultural Affairs was based on the fact that the primary mission of these agencies concerns developing, managing, funding, and marketing multiple types of cultural activities from community arts programs to blockbuster events at museums. Ultimately, these agencies play a major role in cultural development at the local level. Although other public agencies not included in the survey – such as redevelopment agencies, education boards, departments of parks and recreation, historic preservation commissions, and special events offices – may contribute to local cultural activities, these agencies have other focal priorities and their scope and impact in the realm of municipal cultural development is minor in terms of funding and prominence compared with Cultural Affairs.

The survey targeted the managers/directors of the agencies. As in any survey, the findings reflect the respondents' perceptions and knowledge of the subject matter. While it may be difficult for one individual in a single agency to accurately assess the full spectrum of cultural development activities of an entire city, the survey nonetheless provides insight into cultural development strategies based on the opinions of those most knowledgeable and directly involved in their inception, development, implementation, and promotion.

Due to the diverse nature of cultural policy and planning at the local level and the fact that there is no one overarching body charged with implementing a cultural strategy for most cities, this paper does not set out to accomplish the Herculean task of assessing the full scope of municipal arts and cultural programs assumed by US cities. By concentrating on Departments of Cultural Affairs, however, the paper does provide an initial step toward understanding how and why municipalities in the US currently approach arts and cultural development activities. The focus on Cultural Affairs is also apt in helping to determine the extent to which economic motivations have truly taken over cultural development activities. Additionally, we distributed the same survey to Convention and Visitors Bureaus and Economic Development Agencies in cities with such freestanding public and quasi-public agencies. The survey responses from these agencies were significantly fewer in number and do not constitute a significant sample size. Nevertheless, responses from the Visitors Bureaus and Economic Development departments were remarkably similar to the responses we received from Cultural Affairs Departments.<sup>8</sup>

#### *The Type and Scope of Municipal Cultural Strategies*

The agencies in the survey indicated that municipal governments are heavily involved in cultural activities and facilities. As shown in Table 2, all but two of the respondents (93%) report that their city maintains a public art program. Twenty-five (86%) of the cities in the survey have opened or helped to open a museum or gallery. The agencies reported that local governments support both large and small cultural facilities, and are as involved with those



**TABLE 2**

Number of cities reporting municipal involvement in cultural facilities and activities in the last ten years.

	Frequency	Percent
Maintained a program of public art	27	93%
Opened or helped a private or nonprofit group to open a museum or gallery	25	86%
Organized cultural events	23	79%
Promotion of cultural and artistic activities	23	79%
Opened or helped a private or nonprofit group to open a performing arts theater or center	20	69%
Preservation of historically significant public space, building, or monument	20	69%
Developed an arts or cultural district	16	55%
Opened a community arts or cultural center	12	41%

*N* = 29

*Note:* Total *N* represents the total number of cities represented in the survey. Respondents were asked "To the best of your knowledge, in the last ten years has your city ..." and were provided with the list of choices shown in the table.

projects that emphasize local history and ethnic groups such as the new African American Museum in New Orleans, as they are in supporting the larger high-profile art museums such as the Milwaukee Museum of Art or the Houston Museum of Fine Arts. Most often, municipal support for cultural facilities comes in the form of land contributions, funding for renovations and expansions, and developing parking and infrastructure.<sup>9</sup>

Seventy-nine percent of the cities surveyed have organized cultural events over the last ten years. Saint Louis' Louis and Clark Festival, San Jose's Gay Pride Parade, Oakland's Art and Soul Festival, and many ethnic festivals put local heritage and diversity on display. Some cities have music festivals or use events to provide opportunities for the public to experience the local arts: the City of Baltimore sponsors Artscape and Dallas has City Arts, while many of the cities organize music, particularly jazz, festivals. Additionally, 79% of the respondents indicated that their local government has helped promote cultural activities. While the gamut of cultural activities continues to be developed with municipal support, comparatively few cities devote attention to community arts centers. Only 12 cities (41%) have opened a community arts or cultural center in the last ten years. Indicative of the entrepreneurial model, over the last decade, agencies on the whole seem to favor more centrally located facilities that can attract city-wide attention, rather than building up smaller community centers dispersed throughout city neighborhoods. Most cities that have developed community art centers over the last ten years, such as Los Angeles, Chicago, and Dallas, provide support for the entire range of cultural activities rather than strategically focusing on the neighborhood level.

According to the survey, annual budgets for Cultural Affairs vary from as little as \$50,000 to as high as \$123,000,000. The mean annual budget is about \$3.8m, and most agencies believe that their local government will maintain or increase the current level of funding for cultural activities and facilities in the near future (48% and 41%, respectively).<sup>10</sup> Although it would be extremely difficult to obtain funding estimates for specific projects and programs through the survey, Table 3 shows that, while the agencies fund a wide variety of cultural activities, the emphasis seems to be on individual facilities (museums,

TABLE 3

Cultural activities, programs and facilities annually funded by responding agencies.

	Frequency	Percent
Museums or galleries	24	83%
Cultural events and festivals	23	79%
Performances	22	76%
Performing arts theaters	22	76%
Promotion and advertisement of cultural and artistic activities	22	76%
Public art programs	22	76%
Museum Exhibits	19	66%
Community arts or cultural centers	18	62%
Program to preserve local heritage	10	34%
Cultural or arts districts	6	21%

*N* = 29

Note: Respondents were asked to "Please mark any cultural activities or facilities that your department funds annually" and were provided with the list of choices shown in the table.

galleries, and theaters) and events.<sup>11</sup> Additionally, many Cultural Affairs Departments perform the function of a Visitors Bureau; 76% are involved in the promotion and advertisement of cultural and artistic activities.<sup>12</sup> Although community arts and cultural centers appear to be a lower priority, these facilities do receive financial support from 62% of the agencies. However, based on the response from Table 2 (in which 41% of the cities report the development of community arts centers over the last ten years), many of these would have been developed quite some time ago. Therefore, although over half of the agencies continue to fund community arts centers, their lack of continued development potentially indicates a shift in cultural development priorities from a more community-based focus to one that is more entrepreneurial.

Considering the strong emphasis on promotional activities and individual events and facilities, the data indicate agencies and cities overwhelmingly favor the entrepreneurial strategy. However, while an analysis of agency functions reinforces this finding, it also demonstrates that aspects of the other strategies are not entirely absent. As Table 4 shows, 83% of the Cultural Affairs Departments in the survey provide direct support to individual cultural institutions, while 69% engage in promotion and 62% on providing information to tourists. At the same time, reflecting the creative class and progressive strategies, 72% report that they provide funding and grants to artists, yet less than one third of the agencies are involved in arts education, job training, and developing artists' studios and housing. It is clear that the majority of agencies devote more attention and resources toward entrepreneurial activities such as promotion. Support for community-based programs appears in the context of a wide range of cultural activities rather than as a strategic focus on their development. However, in light of the growing connection between the arts and economic development indicative of the creative class strategy, a few cities not well-known as cultural destinations report that they are in the process of developing neighborhood-based art centers. For example, in Tampa, Cultural Affairs is developing an "artist village" of live-work spaces. This is a strategy to revitalize an "historic yet blighted area" and also to benefit local artists.

Indeed, economic goals seem to dominate social ones in the development of municipal cultural strategies. Few agencies indicated that social goals such as "improving access to the arts" (10%) are as important as economically motivated goals, especially those related to

**TABLE 4**  
Stated cultural development activities of cultural affairs departments.

	Frequency	%
Funding to cultural institutions	24	83%
Funding and grants to artists	21	72%
Promote and advertise cultural activities and events	20	69%
Provide information to visitors and tourists	18	62%
Organize cultural activities and events	18	62%
Operate cultural facilities (e.g. museums, theaters, etc)	14	48%
Arts education programs	9	31%
Technical assistance and job training programs	6	21%
Develop artist studio space	3	10%
Folk and traditional arts research	2	7%
Develop artist housing	1	3%

*N* = 29

*Note:* This table is a composite of two questions. In the first question, respondents were asked to list the “cultural development activities of their department” from a given set of choices. In the second question respondents were asked to “Please list any cultural activities or programs that your department currently operates” in their own words. These responses were then grouped by the authors.

“attracting visitors” (29%) and “emphasizing the uniqueness of the city” (24%). As one respondent admitted, “We want to attract visitors . . . People are looking for new experiences so you try and do both – the old favorites that most every city has while promoting the uniqueness of your community.” Following this logic, most agencies expressed a preference for flagship cultural facilities and major events. The emphasis on tourism and large, prominent facilities and events, indicative of the entrepreneurial model, was highly reported by all agencies.

### *The Role and Purpose of Municipal Cultural Activities*

Fifty-two percent of the agencies report that during the last decade their city government provided some form of support for cultural facilities as a component of a larger planned development that includes retail, entertainment facilities, and/or housing. The majority of these cities indicated that they did so to generate economic development and tourism. Highlighting the catalytic role that the arts holds in both the entrepreneurial and creative class strategies, one respondent pointed out that “cultural activities are a major draw for new businesses and to attract and retain residents . . . [the arts] draws an audience that otherwise would not come to the city”. Another insisted that “our agency believes that the creative industries represent the potential for the city”.

To make cultural strategies politically acceptable to all, cities tout them as “improving the quality of life” for all citizens. Respondents overwhelmingly (93%) considered this as the most important benefit of cultural activities (Table 5). However, more specific indicators of a positive quality of life – such as “encouraging understanding and awareness of other groups and cultures” (21%), “promoting education in the arts” (14%), and “improving public spaces” (14%) – received considerably fewer responses. Significantly, these benefits paled in comparison to entrepreneurial motives such as “attracting visitors and tourists” (59%), and “strengthening the competitive advantage of the city” (34%).<sup>13</sup>

TABLE 5

Respondents' opinions of the most important benefits of cultural activities and facilities.

	Frequency	Percent
Improve quality of life	27	93%
Attract visitors and tourists	17	59%
Strengthen competitive advantage of city	10	34%
Create employment opportunities	7	24%
Encourage understanding and awareness of other groups and cultures	6	21%
Support local business and services	6	21%
Improve image of city	4	14%
Improve public spaces	4	14%
Promote education in the arts	4	14%
Increase municipal revenues	2	7%
Increase property values	0	0%

*N* = 29

Note: Respondents were asked to "Please rank the five most important ways that you consider cultural activities and facilities to benefit your city?" and were provided with the list of choices shown in the table. This table shows the cumulative total of the top three responses. Percent does not equal 100 due to multiple responses.

Despite the recent growth of studies claiming that quality of life issues are assuming an even more pronounced economic role in cities, it appears that few Departments of Cultural Affairs view the economic role of cultural activities as anything more than tourist attractors. Fewer cities see cultural activities as "creating employment opportunities" (24%) and providing "support for businesses and services" (21%), as proponents of creative class strategies are calling for (Table 5). However, from the point of view of agencies in cities that support creative class initiatives – as diverse as San Diego, Nashville, and Tampa (which even has a division within its Arts and Cultural Affairs Department called the Creative Industries Office), the availability of cultural activities is economically important primarily because, as one respondent mentioned, they provide public amenities that make a city "a better place for creative people to live and work". Furthermore, as another respondent asserted,

a healthy arts and culture community should operate like a balanced ecosystem; it is necessary to have abundance and diversity of all types of arts and culture programs ... to create a synergy that makes for a vibrant arts and culture community and quality of life that people will pay to experience.

Municipalities seem to prefer to develop and promote certain cultural events, activities, and facilities over others. As shown in Table 6, only 4% felt that a combination of "all cultural activities and facilities" was necessary to achieve the most benefits and only 9% emphasized the development and promotion of larger areas such as "cultural or art districts". Rather, "major cultural facilities" and "cultural events and festivals" received the highest rate of response (26% and 19%, respectively). Despite calls by "creative city" enthusiasts to look beyond the big-ticket facilities and consider smaller-scale arts districts and galleries – as well as the stated importance of the local quality of life by a majority of respondents – it appears that many cultural authorities support the entrepreneurial approach, which calls for the use of prominently located buildings and high profile events as catalysts to stimulate develop-

**TABLE 6**  
Type of cultural activity or facility that achieves the most benefits.

	Frequency	Percent
Major cultural facilities (museums, galleries, performing arts centers)	12	26%
Cultural events and festivals	9	19%
Funding private, nonprofit cultural groups and individual artists	7	15%
Cultural or arts districts	4	9%
Public art	4	9%
Art galleries	3	6%
Community arts groups or cultural centers	3	6%
All	2	4%
Ethnic festivals, facilities, and districts	2	4%
Cultural tours and itineraries	1	2%

*N* = 47

Note: Respondents were asked, "In your view, which particular cultural activities or facilities achieve the most benefits?" The responses were then grouped by the authors. Total percentages do not equal 100% because some respondents provided more than one answer.

ment in surrounding areas rather than directly investing in them. Moreover, the low ranking of "community arts and cultural centers", listed by only 6% of the respondents, and the absence of, for instance, arts education and training programs, again reflects the marginalization of more progressive cultural strategies.

The emphasis on identifiable events and facilities also reflects the rivalry among cities for tourists and conventioners in which imagery plays a very significant role in "branding" the city as an attractive destination. As one respondent argued,

It seems that there is a baseline of things you must have to legitimize your city as a "player". Everyone must have a symphony orchestra, a ballet or other dance company and an art museum. Then, you need something that will help you stand out from the competition – either an extremely wonderful one of these things or something unique or cutting edge. Ideally, you will have something that will reflect the essence of your community, build community pride, and give you something to promote that will stand out.

Thus, an overwhelming number of agencies believe that cultural activities help them to "stand out" by emphasizing their distinctiveness (79%) and generating local pride (66%) (Table 7). However, significantly fewer agency respondents argued that cultural activities help to revitalize decaying areas (34%) – an assumed positive impact of catalytic projects. We also inquired as to the types of cultural activities that most successfully promote a positive city image. Consistent with prior responses, major events and facilities were mentioned much more frequently than programs such as public art and arts education.

### *Urban Icon and Cultural Catalyst? The Role of Flagship Cultural Projects*

Although a considerable amount of attention in the literature has been given to flagship projects, until recently, little research has specifically focused on flagship cultural projects – major museums, galleries, and performing arts centers, with regional, national, or international name recognition (Hamnett & Shoal 2003). Nonetheless, a large majority of

**TABLE 7**

Most important ways that cultural activities and facilities create a positive city image.

	Frequency	Percent
Emphasize the distinctiveness of your city	23	79%
Building local pride	19	66%
Demonstrate international importance	13	45%
Overcome a negative city or neighborhood image	11	38%
Revitalize decaying areas	10	34%
Creating a positive image of local government	9	31%

*N* = 29

Note: Respondents were asked to "Please rank the five most important ways that cultural activities and facilities can help to create a positive city image" and were provided with the list of choices shown in the table.

cities in our survey (25 or 86%) reported that they have at least one flagship cultural project such as the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis or the Disney Concert Hall in Los Angeles. As displayed in Table 8, the respondents indicated that the most important benefits of cultural flagship projects were to "improve the quality of life" (75%) and to "attract visitors and tourists" (68%). Consistent with prior responses, the primary role of flagship cultural facilities appears to be focused on attracting people to a particular destination – both as a quality of life amenity for residents and as a visitor attraction – and thereby stimulating consumption. However, although flagship projects are emblematic of the entrepreneurial model, respondents showed mixed feelings regarding their ability to catalyze private sector development and area revitalization, support local business, or increase municipal revenues.

While respondents have confidence in flagship projects as quality of life attractors, their overall support in a wider context is more mixed. When asked if flagship projects

**TABLE 8**

Most important benefits of flagship cultural projects in respondent cities.

	Frequency	Percent
Improve quality of life	21	75%
Attract visitors and tourists	19	68%
Improve image of city	15	54%
Strengthen competitive advantage of city	11	39%
Support local business and services	7	25%
Improve public spaces	3	11%
Increase municipal revenues	3	11%
Create Employment Opportunities	2	7%
Encourage understanding and awareness of other groups and cultures	1	4%
Promote education in the arts	0	0%
Increase property values	0	0%

*N* = 28

Note: Respondents were asked to "Please rank the five most important ways that you consider flagship projects to benefit your city?" and were provided with the list of choices shown in the table. This table shows the cumulative total of the top three responses. Numbers do not add up to 100 percent due to multiple responses.

provide more benefits than less prominent cultural facilities or smaller community cultural centers, only 29% agreed, while 43% believed that they are of equal importance and 18% stated that they do not. Agencies favoring flagship projects cited their visibility, their ability to attract people, and to help the local arts community. As one respondent put it,

[our city's flagship project] has a large physical presence, and has become a sort of "icon" for the city. It is visible from the waterfront and the train station, and is the most significant new construction in decades. Because of its large scale, its quality programming, and its connectivity to the rest of downtown, the city's cultural community could not thrive without it.

While critics have condemned flagship projects as costly undertakings which funnel investment to only specific city areas and population segments (Bianchini *et al.* 1992), the majority of respondents view flagships as essential components of the city's cultural community. Proponents of flagships, and many who believed them equally as important as other facilities, indicated that they view them as more than entrepreneurial machines for attracting tourist dollars, but also as strategies to promote other local cultural activities and support the arts community as a whole. As one survey respondent argued, "particularly in cities where arts funding has been steadily decreasing, flagship projects probably have a greater impact in raising awareness of the importance of arts and culture". Thus, as another respondent believes,

flagship projects ... can act as a rising tide that lifts all boats. Small arts organizations benefit from the center's success. These high profile arts institutions also attract new companies and investment in the area, which also helps our overall arts community.

Contrasting views were heard by a significant minority of respondents. These cities tended to be those held up as emblematic of the creative class strategy such as Austin and Portland or the few cities that did not report the existence of flagships such as Wichita. Rejecting the entrepreneurial model, these respondents stressed that smaller cultural facilities are crucial because they deliver services to more focused areas of interest and locations. They argued that "what makes [our city] so distinctive is the success of many emerging organizations and smaller-scale (sometimes informal) arts and culture activities around town and in outlying neighborhoods", and that "smaller venues and facilities tend to be more dynamic and take greater risks that challenge the community and encourage dialogue".

## Conclusion

In summary, given the entrepreneurial focus, most agencies seem to recognize cultural activities and facilities as important facets of local economic development. In this regard, the survey highlighted certain trends. First, US cities seem to prefer cultural development strategies that rely on prominent special events and centrally located facilities over city-wide programs that enrich diverse city neighborhoods through public art projects or community cultural centers, or by encouraging local cultural production. The survey findings reinforce the fact that in most cities, as cultural activities have become essential components of urban development and tourism strategies, the public role in community-based arts and culture projects has declined. Second, cultural activities are largely seen by agencies as an important way to emphasize a city's uniqueness, both as an overall "branding" strategy and to attract visitors to downtown. Likewise, although some respondents reacted negatively to the flagship cultural facilities, these projects are often promoted because of their ability to

underline a city's presence on the national or international stage, but also for their potential to support the local arts community when municipal governments are unable or unwilling to do so. Finally, while the agencies appear to stress economic objectives, they do not necessarily abandon social and educational goals, arguing that cultural activities stimulate economic development while improving the quality of life. However, rather than witnessing the rise of projects specifically geared to the creative class or revitalizing inner-city neighborhoods, we see a reliance on the major facilities and events attractive to a wide audience of visitors and residents alike.

Do cities espouse the "entrepreneurial", "creative", or "progressive" approaches in the development of cultural strategies? Although the survey found that elements of all models are used by the agencies, entrepreneurial strategies are most prominently represented in their agendas. As outlined in the introduction, the emphasis on entrepreneurial strategies by municipal arts agencies is a product of a variety of factors affecting cities. Many agencies certainly espouse the entrepreneurial model where privatization and economic growth frame the goals of cultural development and, hence, the types of activities that receive municipal support. Additionally, budgetary priorities in many cities are driving municipal cultural development as Departments of Cultural Affairs have been forced to justify their existence increasingly in economic terms. This is in evidence in a wide range of places from Baltimore's Office of Promotion and the Arts (created in 2002) to the Mayor's Office of Arts, Tourism and Cultural Development in Boston (created in 2004). In Los Angeles, the Department of Cultural Affairs was resurrected only after redefining its focus towards the promotion of cultural tourism in the city (Haithman 2004).

On the one hand, the ultimate result of this scenario, as confirmed in the survey, is that progressive strategies are marginalized as cultural activities are primarily assessed in terms of their economic value. Although we did not expect to find quantitatively equal support for progressive strategies, the data show significantly less involvement in and consideration of community-oriented arts facilities and education programs in underserved communities, and little support for cultural production and innovation. Furthermore, the overall focus on promotional activities and centralized facilities and blockbuster events often necessitates support for cultural activities that are more mainstream and of politically neutral content.

On the other hand, while local governments may not directly undertake programs characteristic of a progressive approach, a central mandate of a number of Cultural Affairs Departments is to provide financial support to nonprofit institutions that frequently conduct such programs. At the same time, this situation reflects the entrepreneurial climate in which public assistance for those cultural activities and programs that are not directly economically feasible are contracted out to private and nonprofit entities.

While entrepreneurial strategies are pursued by all responding agencies, some also pursue the other two strategies to varying degrees. These tend to be agencies with larger budgets and located in cities known as cultural destinations, such as New York or Chicago, which can afford to pursue a wider range of cultural strategies or cities already hailed as meccas for the creative class such as Portland or San Diego. However, in none of these cities do the agencies pursue creative class or progressive strategies exclusively. The creative class agenda has invigorated some agencies to tackle the overlap between economic gain and social and cultural benefits by, as one respondent explained, "making the city a better place for creative people to live and work, we think that spans a gamut from large cultural facilities to housing and even health care opportunities for creatives". However, in most cases Cultural Affairs have yet to implement many of the initiatives proposed by the creative class



strategy.<sup>14</sup> While there has been a great deal of hype surrounding places that are enacting creative class strategies such as Michigan's "Cool Cities Initiative" or Spokane, Washington's proposal to create a "gay district" similar to the Castro in San Francisco (Geranios 2005), most cities in this survey did not report such schemes.

Therefore, although the entrepreneurial model appears dominant, municipal cultural strategies do not wholly conform to the type of urban redevelopment scenarios predicted by Harvey (1989a) and Eisinger (2000) in which spectacular urban spaces for affluent tourists reign. First, agencies concentrate their promotional efforts at the local level more than the national or international levels. Given this local focus, the question of who is a tourist and who benefits from cultural development strategies needs to be analyzed further. Similarly, these critiques miss the overall quality of life concerns that most of the respondents emphasize, and within this, the multiple meanings that quality of life assumes as both a set of economic and social goods. In the process, a more complex agenda than simply building the city for either tourists or locals emerges and is a condition that begs for further research in the realms of cultural policy and economic development.

Despite the inherent problems in existing cultural development strategies – a bias towards economic goals and specific audiences and a resulting uneven development that favors prominent locations and facilities – local governments are far from abandoning their support for the arts and cultural activities. The challenge is to frame cultural strategies for urban revitalization that address social and educational goals without ignoring economic realities.

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#### NOTES

1. Cultural Affairs is the most common designation in the US for the municipal agency variously charged with developing, managing, funding, and marketing local cultural activities.
2. In providing this brief summary of international cultural policy, this section necessarily generalizes about the various experiences of what are diverse places and does not address the varying definitions of "culture" by local governments.
3. The progressive approach is similar to that put forth by the cultural democracy and community arts movements, which are concerned with promoting cultural diversity, ensuring equitable access to cultural resources, and a broad participation in cultural life and cultural policy decision-making (Adams & Goldbard 1995).
4. A copy of the survey questionnaire is available upon request from the authors.
5. Bayliss (2004) recently conducted a survey of 19 municipal Arts Officers in Denmark in which he finds evidence of a "social turn" in cultural policy. However, while Danish officials seem to reject economic goals for more socially focused objectives, in practice they emphasize cultural strategies that favor consumption over production and those that are targeted at generating economic growth. In the US, Judd *et al.* (2003) recently conducted a survey of public entities that concentrated on tourism and entertainment facilities, rather than specifically on cultural activities and facilities. At the same time, this survey finds that cities develop and market cultural activities as a central strategy to attract tourists.
6. We initially piloted the survey in the Los Angeles Department of Cultural Affairs. The cities that responded to the survey were: Atlanta, Austin, Baltimore, Boston, Buffalo, Chicago,

Dallas, Houston, Indianapolis, Los Angeles, Milwaukee, Minneapolis, Nashville, New Orleans, New York City, Oakland, Oklahoma City, Phoenix, Pittsburgh, Portland, Raleigh, Sacramento, San Antonio, San Diego, San Jose, Seattle, St Louis, Tampa, and Wichita. The cities that did not respond to the survey were: Albuquerque, Anaheim, Anchorage, Aurora, Cincinnati, Colorado Springs, Corpus Christi, Denver, Detroit, El Paso, Honolulu, Las Vegas, Lexington, Louisville, Miami, San Francisco, Toledo, Tucson, Virginia Beach, Washington DC. Seven cities with populations over 250,000 did not maintain a division of Cultural Affairs.

7. Two cities – Indianapolis and Nashville – maintained both individual Cultural Affairs agencies and a related agency as a division of the Mayor’s office (Indianapolis) and of Economic Development (Nashville). The latter divisions were not included in the survey population.
8. A full report that includes the responses from all three types of agencies (Cultural Affairs, Visitors Bureaus, and Economic Development) is available from the authors upon request.
9. State authorized property tax exemptions also comprise an important form of support for nonprofit cultural institutions. We thank an anonymous reviewer for this observation.
10. The mean annual budget of Cultural Affairs Departments does not include New York City Cultural Affairs, whose annual budget is \$123m, nearly 13 times greater than the next largest agency budget.
11. The survey did not specifically distinguish between cultural facilities and cultural institutions or organizations.
12. It is interesting to note, however, that agencies concentrate their promotional efforts on local (91%) and regional (73%) levels to a far greater extent than national (5%) or international (5%).
13. Of course, because the survey did not specifically explore the varying definitions of “quality of life”, we can only speculate on the respondents’ conceptualization of this term.
14. This does not mean that other municipal agencies refrain from adopting creative class-based strategies.

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